

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. An apparatus for tracking usage information for an image
2 forming device, comprising:
3 an image forming device;
4 processing circuitry associated with the image forming device and
5 operative to detect consumable usage information at the image forming device;
6 and
7 memory coupled with the processing circuitry and operative to store a
8 data file containing the user information, the output job information, and the
9 usage information.

10 2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the data file is a census
11 transaction data file comprising cost accounting information of consumables
12 utilized by the image forming device when generating output jobs.

1 3. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the information of
2 consumables comprises paper usage and the output job comprises a print job.

1 4. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the information of
2 consumables comprises toner usage.

1 5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the usage information of the
2 data file includes data packets containing consumable usage information.

1 6. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a local area
2 network (LAN) and a client computer, wherein the client computer and the
3 image forming device each communicate with the local area network (LAN).

1 7. The apparatus of claim 6 further comprising a domain
2 controller, wherein a user submits a print job to the image forming device from

the client computer, and wherein the domain controller verifies identification of the user.

8. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the image forming device includes a user interface, and wherein a walk-up user submits a copy job to the image forming device via the user interface.

9. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the user interface includes a reader operative to identify the walk-up user.

10. A hard copy output device usable with a local area network (LAN) and a client computer, comprising:
processing circuitry communicating with the hard copy output device and operative to receive LAN data packets from the client computer over the LAN that identifies a user and a print job; and
memory coupled with the processing circuitry and operative to store a data file containing the LAN data packets and consumable usage information.

11. The hard copy device of claim 10 wherein the consumable usage information comprises paper usage and toner usage collected at the hard copy output device corresponding with print job completion.

12. The hard copy device of claim 11 further comprises a user interface configured to enable a user to input a user identification.

13. The hard copy device of claim 10 wherein cost information is collected at the hard copy output device on a print-job-by-print-job basis.

14. The hard copy device of claim 10 wherein the hard copy output device increments page counts to obtain cost information.

1 15. The hard copy device of claim 10 further comprising an LDAP
 2 server and a local area network (LAN), wherein the LDAP server maintains user
 3 information and is operative to implement consumable cost recovery.

1 16. A method of accounting for consumable usage for an image
 2 forming device, comprising:
 3 collecting data identifying a user and a print job;
 4 storing the data in a memory of the image forming device;
 5 generating a print job with the image forming device;
 6 determining consumable usage data at the image forming device; and
 7 storing the consumable usage data in the memory of the image
 8 forming device.

1 17. The method of claim 16 wherein the step of storing the
 2 consumable usage data in the memory comprises storing the page usage and the
 3 toner usage in the memory associated with the data identifying the user and the
 4 print job.

1 18. The method of claim 16 wherein the data identifying a user and
 2 a print job comprises packet data.

1 19. The method of claim 18 wherein the step of collecting packet
 2 data is carried out at a client personal computer.

1 20. The method of claim 16 wherein the step of generating a print
 2 job comprises requesting a print job from a client computer and forwarding the
 3 request over a local area network to the image forming device.

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